

VZCZCXRO0121  
PP RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHDBU #0381/01 0791217  
ZNR UUUUU  
P R 201217Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
RUEHC/USAID WASHDC  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000381

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ENGR](#) [EAID](#) [TI](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: LIGHTS OUT AND EVERYONE HOME-AND COLD

REF: DUSHANBE 199

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Even as Tajikistan seeks to become a regional energy exporter, most of Dushanbe has had only four to six hours of power each day for the last month. Many parts of rural Tajikistan have remained without any electricity throughout the winter, but the fact that the capital is experiencing severe power rationing and shortages underscores how desperately Tajikistan's state-owned power utility Barqi Tojik needs to reform. Although generation projects under construction - such as the 670 megawatt Sangtuda-I hydropower station scheduled to go on line in Spring 2008 - will eventually alleviate some of the shortages, without a real overhaul of the entire electricity system, Tajik citizens will remain in the dark.

¶2. (SBU) COMMENT: In addition to World Bank and Asian Development Bank technical assistance projects, USAID's Regional Energy Markets Assistance Program is working to reform Tajikistan's ailing electricity system and establish a competitive and transparent electricity market. However, it will take political will as much as technical assistance to ensure that Tajiks get reliable power. Further, if Tajikistan does indeed start exporting electricity to Afghanistan and Pakistan under the proposed Central Asia South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM) project, without ensuring its own citizens have adequate light and heat, President Rahmonov may finally face an angry populace tired of being left in the cold. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

¶3. (U) Since mid-February, most parts of Dushanbe only have electricity from approximately 6 am to 8 am and 5 pm to 10 pm, and some areas go 24 - 48 hours without any power. Downtown, home to many government offices and President Rahmonov and his family, remains lit, but government offices in outlying areas, such as the Tax Committee, suffer as much as ordinary residents. The Deputy Head of the Tax Committee - Tajikistan's equivalent of the Internal Revenue Service -- told PolOfs he rushes to the office to print out work between 7 and 8 am and then goes home because there is nothing else to do in the cold building.

¶4. (U) The problem extends throughout the country. In Sughd province in the north, and Khatlon in the southeast, electricity comes for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. The Pamir region Gorno-Badakhshan, which last year was the only region to have winter electricity full time, is still reeling from the effects of the February accident at the Pamir-I power

station and has only limited hours of electricity distribution (Reftel). Press reports have noted that Takistan's biggest enterprise, Tajik Aluminum, has cut its production by two-thirds in response to the electricity shortage.

¶5. (U) In addition to an inefficient distribution system, the shortages stem both from a lower level of water in Tajikistan's biggest reservoir Nurek, and lower than usual winter energy imports from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Desperate Tajik energy representatives met with Uzbek counterparts several times this winter to increase energy inputs to little avail. Demand has also grown-as the old centralized steam heating systems no longer work, many residents try to heat their apartments with small electric or kerosene heaters, despite the inefficiency of heating individual units in large cement block buildings. The government has predicted the shortage will continue a few more weeks, until the water level in Nurek goes up and warmer temperatures reduce demand for home heating.

¶6. (U) Normally unwilling to confront the government, Dushanbe residents raise their hands and shrug in response to the inconvenience. However, contacts have told EmbOffs that in southern Farkhor district angry residents burned goods in a cotton cleaning factory to protest the fact that the factory has electricity, while the town went without. Other rumors report that citizens in Voseh district publicly tore up a picture of President Rahmonov, and clashed with the local police in Kulyob over the electricity rations.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT. Tajiks somewhat blame Uzbekistan for the energy shortages, but mostly the Tajik government for its inability to harness Tajikistan's massive hydro resource potential. Tajik contacts regularly tell EmbOffs that they expect the government to resolve these electricity issues in the next year or two. Continued power shortages have the potential to threaten the delicate stability within Tajikistan. END COMMENT.

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JACOBSON